maethu cymru | foster wales

Caerffili | Caerphilly

join our Caerphilly fostering community



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working together to build better futures for local children

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL CAERFFILI

contents

Thank you for taking an interest in fostering for Foster Wales Caerphilly.
This information pack aims to give you an introduction to fostering in Caerphilly, showing you the steps to become a foster carer and how we will support you in this incredible journey.

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This information pack is just the beginning.
If you would like to find out more, contact us via our website:



fosterwales.caerphilly.gov.uk/contact-us

Alternatively, you can find our details below and/or follow us on social media :



08005875664 Text 'foster' to 78866



fostering@caerphilly.gov.uk



facebook.com/FosterCaerphilly



x.com/CaerphillyCBC



Foster Wales Caerphilly,
Tredomen House, Tredomen Park
Ystrad Mynach, CF827WF

what is foster care?

Fostering means accepting a child as part of your family when they have to be away from their own. It could be for a night, a month, a year or several years. At the heart of fostering is a dedication to make a difference – to change the course of a child's life.

There are many reasons why children can't live with their family, but it is usually because of problems their parents are experiencing, such as illness, relationship difficulties or substance misuse. It may also be because the child has been neglected or abused.

Foster carers can mean a safe place, a fresh start or a new family, but this doesn't mean erasing the past – the important bonds foster children have with their biological families are maintained, whenever possible.

Preserving friendships, familiar places and everything that matters to the child is central to what we do. That's why we will always prioritise keeping children in their local community if it's the right thing for them.

Some children and young people may return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved and it's clear that their parents will be able to look after them safely. Others will not be able to go home and will go on to either be adopted or fostered for the rest of their childhood.

As a local foster carer, you have an important role: to make sure the child feels safe, supported, and happy. Our role is to support you, in every way we can.

Becoming a foster carer is a decision to help local children who need someone on their side. Someone to listen to them, to believe in them, to love them.

"The impact you can have on a child's life can be massive. If you have empathy, can offer safety and a place where a child can thrive then you should give it a go."

Hope, foster child

fostering myth busting

We want to challenge popular beliefs about fostering.
No two children are the same, and neither is the foster carer they need.
Whatever your ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or marital status, we simply ask: can you make a difference? And do you want to? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

1 I'm too young to foster

Myth. Life experience is a great bonus, but being young doesn't mean you can't be part of the Caerphilly fostering community.
With our network of dedicated support to guide you, you can enjoy the exciting path ahead, focusing on love, care and doing something great for your community.

2 I'm too old to foster

Myth. There is no upper age limit to foster, as long as you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy the activities that children need to develop and grow.
Support and learning opportunities are provided for all foster carers. We will always be there for you, equipping you for anything that comes your way.

3 I can't foster if I'm unemployed

Myth. A good foster carer makes sure that the child's needs are at the core of everything they do. If you're currently out of work, it means you'll be able to dedicate all your time to the children's wellbeing and support them full time.
You'll receive a fostering allowance to help with the financial side of fostering.
If you claim benefits, you should still be entitled to them while fostering.

4 I can't foster if I work full time

Myth. A work life isn't always a hindrance to fostering. It's about choosing the right type of fostering for your circumstances and making sure that your network can be there to support you.
We offer a variety of types of foster care, meaning that some will fit in with your life better than others.
It's worth checking with your employer too, they may be supportive of your plans and offer additional flexibility.

5 I can't foster if I live in rented accommodation

Myth. We have foster carers with all kinds of different homes – both rented and owned.
Provided your living situation is safe and secure, this won't stop you from helping a child progress in life. If you like where you live, someone else might too!

6 I can't foster if I don't have a big house

Myth. If you can provide a room for a child to call their own then you need not worry about the size of your house. It's about the love and care, and what happens inside the house that makes it a home for someone else.

7 I can't be a foster carer when I have pets

Myth. If you have a dog, a cat or any other kind of pet, this doesn't mean that you can't become a foster carer. Instead, we actually include your pets in your assessment.
We need to get to know them, as members of your family, and make sure that they and any future foster children will get on safely together.
After all, you can experience another level of support from pets, and they can be a real benefit to children.

8 LGBTQ+ people can't foster

Myth. Being a good foster carer doesn't hinge on your gender, and sexuality has no bearing on your suitability as a foster parent. If you can demonstrate love, compassion and care for others, then the foster care community welcomes you.
Your ability to provide a safe environment for children to express themselves, have fun and learn is all that matters.



who needs fostering?

There's no typical foster child. There's no typical foster family, either. Each child in our care has their own passions and personality. They've come from a unique set of circumstances, which have shaped their lives so far. We're here to make sure their futures are different. Brighter.

Babies and toddlers

Babies and toddlers need your love and support to be able to deal with the separation and loss that they have experienced.
They will usually only need short-term care while their futures are being decided upon by the courts.

During this period, they will need lots of contact with the people that are important and familiar to them, this might be their birth parents or other members of their immediate family.
You will need to take them to and from family visits (up to 5 times a week) as well as help them deal with how they feel before and afterwards.

Your role would also be to introduce routines and boundaries and then to help prepare them to move back to birth parents, a person connected to their family, to an adoptive family, or to a long-term permanent foster family.

Siblings

We believe in staying local, and staying together. Maintaining sibling bonds is important to children; they comfort and reassure each other at what can be a difficult time. It's important to us too, and that's why matching siblings with a foster family, together, is a priority.

When we have siblings needing foster care, often more than one spare bedroom is needed.

Building better futures is often about making the most of the important bonds that already exist, as well as forging new ones.



Shirley, foster carer

"You'll get the support. And honestly, when they go back home or are adopted, it's magical. It's magical. There's nothing like it."

Teenagers

Caring for a teenager means listening, understanding, helping to make sense of the world – and their place in it.
It's about providing stability and security towards adulthood.

There are a lot of myths around teenagers in foster care that aren't always true and mean that we find it hard to find foster families for this group.

Teens in care are there for the same reasons as younger children, such as neglect or abuse, not because they are troublemakers.
At their age they can really benefit from the guidance foster carers provide. The impact and influence of a good routine and a loving, nurturing environment may lead to profound positive effects on their lives. Your guidance might influence key decisions that they make about their future and help make this future brighter.

"We watch movies together, go shopping, enjoy music and gigs and go for food, which is very different comparing to younger children. Seeing them develop into young adults is very rewarding."

Janine, foster carer

Young refugees/asylum seekers

Young refugees arriving in Wales are looking for safety, understanding, support, accommodation, and guidance.

Many young refugees have to leave behind their loving family to escape war, violence, and oppression with the hope of a better life. With the help of your local authority, you can guide a young refugee to access the support they need.

Many local authority foster carers are already providing vital support, but more are needed to address the ongoing crisis.

Most young refugees arriving in Wales are teenage boys; many come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Sudan. Enabling them to continue religious practices and customs helps provide them with continuity, comfort, and wellbeing.

Young refugees/asylum seekers are not looking for new parents, but instead for your support, guidance and a place to stay.

types of fostering

Just as all homes are different, so is the care our foster carers provide. Fostering can mean anything from a few hours, or an overnight stay, to something more long-term. We always adapt to the needs of the child and match this with the type of care the foster carer can provide.

Short-term care

Short-term foster carers provide care for children who need immediate safety in a family home. It can range from overnight to maybe as long as a year and may happen very quickly with little time for preparation and planning.
It's important to stress that a shorter-term foster arrangement doesn't mean a smaller impact, in fact it's the opposite.
It offers the first safe step on a fostering journey for a child who needs it while the decision about where they will live in the future is investigated and eventually decided by the court.



Long-term care

Long-term foster carers provide a stable, loving home with a foster family, to a child who needs permanence outside of their birth family.
Children and foster carers are carefully matched by the fostering service to make sure the child's needs are met.
For a child in foster care, longer-term care provides a stable foster family for life, creating the right environment for them to thrive in and preparing them to live independently as adults.

While short-term and long-term fostering cover all kinds of foster care, within these terms there are also some more specialist types, including:

Short break (respite care)

Short break foster care offers that little break away for a child who needs it most, and offers a little break to foster carers to support their well-being.
It isn't defined by a particular length of time, but allows a short getaway for a night, a weekend or even just a few hours.
This type of foster care suits someone who is committed to helping children and young people, but only has limited time available to do so.
Our team plans short breaks in advance, making them a regular occurrence or just when the child needs it.

Parent and child

Parent and child foster care helps parents to build up the skills they need, both personally and for their child.
This type of fostering enables you to provide a safe, caring and supportive environment for a parent who really needs that support.
You'll have the opportunity to nurture the next generation so that they can do the same.
Parent and child foster care also ensures that a young child or a baby is having all their needs met in a safe environment, whilst foster carers are supporting parents in their parenting journey.

Therapeutic care

Therapeutic foster care is an incredibly rewarding type of care, and our team will always give an extra level of support to both the child and the foster carer involved.
Children with more complex emotional or behavioural needs may benefit from a slightly different kind of care. That's what MyST (My Support Team) can provide.
Its remit is to meet children's mental health needs through (foster or biological) family care in the child's community and to help them live as ordinary life as possible.
We do this by working psychologically with the child themselves often using activity-based sessions in areas the child is interested in and comfortable with.
It's that extra support and guidance they need that can help them develop and fulfill their potential.

Fostering will surprise you. It will challenge you. It will reward you.

what makes a good foster carer?



When it comes down to it, a foster carer's role is to be there. To be steady and dependable. It's something that becomes second nature – with a team around you, with support and training, you become the person who's there.

Essentials:

- A spare room for a child to feel safe and have their own privacy
- Ability to make a child feel safe and welcome
- Open mind, heart and time to commit to looking after a vulnerable child or a young person
- Dependability

It's not about ticking all the boxes. It's about compassion and care every day, for as long as the child is with you.
They need someone to listen to them and to believe in them.
If you can do that, we want to hear from you.

Personality strengths:

- A nurturing, caring and empathetic approach with children and young people
- Patience and dedication to reach the goal
- Can-do attitude and optimism
- Energy and stamina - someone who enjoys being busy and having variety of tasks
- Open-minded, tolerant and accepting of people's differences
- Sensitive and empathetic - understands and acknowledge feelings and needs of others
- Calm under pressure and able to think clearly during times of stress
- Communication and collaboration skills - able to work closely with social workers, parents and other professionals who are involved in the children's lives

why become a foster carer with Foster Wales Caerphilly?

Key facts about Foster Wales:

- We are the national network of not-for-profit Local Authority fostering services across Wales
- We have a national presence built on local expertise
- Our purpose is to work as a team to build better futures for local children, not for profit
- Each Local Authority carer, and children in our care, have a complete local support network, so you never feel alone
- We're part of the community and a friendly, familiar face

By joining us:

- You become a member of the national fostering community in Wales, an organisation with a mission to build better futures for local children
- You help us avoid the use of expensive profit-making fostering agencies, instead we can invest more resources in Caerphilly
- We work as a team - in partnership with local schools, health, voluntary and council services on a regular basis which means an all-round support for you
- You will be matched with the right child for you and your family. We believe that better matches make for more sustainable, stable placements, and create better outcomes for foster children and foster carers alike
- The children you look after stay in or near the communities they know
- Other Caerphilly foster carers live locally to you, making it easier to build friendships and help each other out



Claire and Nick, foster carers

"We've got some really good friends now that are foster carers too. We've made really really strong friendship which is really nice. You get strong sense of community from other foster carers."

already fostering? transfer to us!

Foster Wales Caerphilly is part of a national network of 22 Welsh Local Authority fostering services, all working together towards the same goal.
If you're not fostering as part of your Local Authority, you can transfer to us.

Reasons to transfer:

- keep children in their local communities, close to their friends, schools, family and familiar places
- foster directly with LA social work teams and experts. We are not for profit.
- receive high quality training and support
- more local authority foster carers means less money spent on expensive placements with commercial fostering agencies
- become part of the Caerphilly fostering community; we are a team of people who care and we support each other every step of the way

If you're an experienced foster carer, who is committed to caring for children and young people in Caerphilly, we would like to hear from you.

We know that the decision of transferring from your agency to Foster Wales is not going to be made lightly, especially if you already have a child in your care.

We're here to guide you and help you. You're welcome to contact us for a friendly and informal chat to discuss your queries and concerns.

what support and financial allowances will I get?

Apart from working with children and young people and making a difference to their lives, the additional benefits we offer are community, support and career development opportunities.

Support and rewards

Competitive allowances

At Foster Wales Caerphilly we want you to feel supported.
Currently we have foster carers who receive a minimum of £657 per week for fostering 2 children. Find out more about financial help on the next page.

Learning and development

When you become a foster carer, you never stop learning and developing your skills. From paediatric first aid to child development, online and in-person. You can achieve qualifications in social care through fostering.



Professional support

- Right from the start, you will be assigned a dedicated social worker and have access to a dedicated therapeutic social work team.
- Men Who Care – group for male carers that offers peer support and is part of the package of extra assistance.
- When you join Foster Wales Caerphilly, we'll also cover your membership to The Fostering Network and The Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru. These specialist fostering organisations offer independent support, private advice, guidance, training, and a whole host of additional benefits.
- Guidance, support and training from My Support Team (MyST).

Other rewards

- SMART card, offering a range of savings including discounted entry to local attractions and venues.
- CADW pass which gives you free entry to all castles in Wales.

Fostering community

We also have an incredible community of foster carers who are all well connected and are always happy to share experiences and wisdom.

Financial support

Regular allowances

The weekly fostering payment made to all Caerphilly City Council approved foster carers includes two elements – the Fostering Allowance, at a level which is consistent with advice from the Welsh Government, and a Placement Fee. Both of these payments are related to the age of the child or young person placed, and will be paid for each young person whilst they continue to be placed with the foster carer. Payments for placements are made on a fortnightly basis – monies will be transferred directly into your bank account.

Fostering allowances + Placement fees (weekly per child)

Age banding	Fostering allowance	Placement fee	Total
0 - 4	£218	£140.76	£358.76
5 - 10	£199	£180.34	£379.35
11 - 15	£199	£203.44	£402.44
16+	£248	£203.44	£454.44

The Fostering Allowance payment is intended to cover the cost of the following:

- Clothing, including school uniform, and sports and leisure wear etc
- Food, including lunch at school, and including most special dietary requirements (children placed with foster carers are not eligible for free school meals)
- Cultural and religious needs
- Pocket money
- Costs associated with the child/young person's birthday, Christmas and other festivals
- Toiletries, hair care and skin care products
- General day-to-day travel to school/college, and routine health care appointments, and leisure activities etc.
- Costs associated with general leisure and recreational activities including materials
- School outings/visits in line with the National Curriculum
- Cost of accompanying the foster family on holidays in UK or abroad, outings, day trips etc
- General wear and tear of the home
- Purchase and replacement of general home furnishings (such as bedding, linen and blinds), necessary safety equipment (such as fire guards, safety gates, smoke alarms, CO monitor), toys and small baby-related items.
- Appropriate care of the child including general day care or other care arrangements

Holiday entitlement

without children	with children
• You are entitled to have an agreed two-week 'break' during the financial year which runs from April through to March. • You will receive one payment of the foster carer fee equivalent to the eldest child in your care at the time of the break. All other payments will cease during this time.	• To ensure children have the best experiences, we encourage you to make them part of your plans. If you take your foster children with you on holidays you will receive your normal payment with an additional holiday fee for each child (this being the fee element). This allowance is a maximum of 2 weeks per year. • Payments will be made 2-4 weeks following the holiday request being accepted by the Fostering Team.

Additional allowances

Mileage

As a foster carer you can claim for additional mileage for any journeys that are over normal everyday travelling for the child and for journeys in relation to your role as a foster carer.

Birthday and Christmas allowance

As a foster carer you can claim for additional mileage for any journeys that are over normal everyday travelling for the child and for journeys in relation to your role as a foster carer.

£100 Birthday allowance in addition to your weekly allowance will be paid prior to the child/young people's birth date automatically.

£200 Christmas allowance will be paid at the end of November annually; in circumstances where a child may become looked after following this, the family placement worker will need to be submitting a request for payment.

NB: If there is a disruption in placement and you have received the above monies, the expectation will be that this payment will be recouped or moved with the child in both instances.

Retainer payments

If you do not have any placements but are however available, you may receive a retainer fee at the highest rate of the previous child in placement.

Initial clothing allowance

If a child is being placed for the first time into foster care and does not have adequate clothing, you can request an initial one-off clothing allowance payment. This is to purchase the basic clothing that the child will need.

The initial clothing allowance is not paid in situations such as a child moving from a short-term placement to a long term placement or if a child is moving due to breakdown in placement.

Age banding	Clothing allowance
0 - 11	£130
11+	£200

NB: All other clothing needs, including school uniforms, should be met from the allowances paid fortnightly.

Day care

Day care can be provided in circumstances where support networks are unavailable for training or in situations where support is required to maintain a placement. Day care cannot be paid in circumstances where your child in placement has planned school holidays/inset days.

Incentive Payment (recruitment) - Care Friends App

If you recommend family/friends to become a foster carer for Caerphilly, you will be rewarded with a one-off payment of £500 once the approved carer accommodates their first placement.

You also receive £1 each time you share a fostering role with a family member, friend, acquaintance or colleague.

Tax arrangement when you foster

When you start fostering, you'll need to register as self-employed and file tax returns. You'll also be entitled to qualifying care relief which means you can:

- receive £18,140 from fostering before you have to pay tax
- get tax relief for every week you foster a child

There is more information about paying tax in the guide for foster parents.

Please note that foster carers cannot claim some welfare benefits for children placed with them, such as child benefit or child tax credits.

steps to becoming a foster carer

Foster Wales Caerphilly is part of a national network of 22 Welsh Local Authority fostering services, all working together towards the same goal.
If you're not fostering as part of your Local Authority, you can transfer to us.

get in touch!
a friendly chat

home visit
we can explain it all better face to face

forms and checks
let's get the essentials out of the way

training
this is a real eye-opener

your assessor

this is when we really get to know you. we want fostering to be a success, so we take our time.

your childhood, education, relationships, views and beliefs. your family and support. your referees

your "form f" assessment report

a panel reads the report

approval
hurray!

your first phone call
is it a match?



your first foster child

FAQs

You may still have some unanswered questions, that's normal. Fostering is not a decision to make overnight. Below you can find questions we're asked all the time.

can I foster if I'm single?

Yes. There are no special requirements around relationships. You can be single, married or in a civil partnership. Children need a safe home and stability. If you can offer this, you can foster.

do I have to give up job to foster?

No. Like biological parents or family guardians, some foster carers work full time. However, having a flexible work schedule can help. Some foster carers who work full time decide to offer short breaks on weekends or holidays, others long-term fostering supported by family members.

do I need a spare bedroom to foster?

Generally, yes. You need a spare bedroom where a child can feel safe and have a privacy. There are exceptions. If you foster siblings they could share a room.

how long does it take to become a foster carer?

From our first talk to your official green light, the process of becoming a foster carer can take up to 4-6 months. Every step of the way, we'll be with you.

who decides which children I foster?

We work with you to match children with the right home for them. You're unique, with your own skills and strengths, and the way your foster family will look is unique too. It's about listening to you and your family. We can then match you with the foster child who is the best fit for your skills and circumstances.

can I foster if I have a criminal conviction?

It depends on various factors, like the type of your conviction, or your age when the offence took place. As part of the assessment process all applicants undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check. We advise that all previous convictions should be discussed with us as early in the process as possible.

do I need to be qualified to foster?

No. You don't need any previous qualifications or a degree to foster. Just by thinking about it, you've got the basics to become a great foster carer. Compassion. Dedication. Curiosity.
We offer the expertise to help you build on those basics, to give you all the tools you will need. With training courses and qualifications we offer, you'll never feel like you're standing still.

do I have to be able to drive?

It is recommended, but also depends on your location and access to public transport. As a foster carer you're required to attend various meetings (often during working hours) and taking your foster child to meet up with their birth family (if applicable) in various locations. Depending on your foster child's age, you should also be able to drop/pick them up from school, arrange after school activities, be able to assist with any emergencies like health appointments or hospital visits, etc.

can I foster if I have health problems?

It depends. As part of the assessment, all applicants undergo a medical to check if you are fit to foster. It's carried out by your GP and the report is sent to our medical advisor for their views about your physical and mental health. We advise that you discuss any health issues with us as early as possible.

can I foster if I have my own children?

Yes. In fact the experience you have raising your own children can help you in your fostering journey. Fostering can also have various positive effects on your own children. It teaches them to be more caring, understanding of other people's problems, charitable and sharing. Many go on to work in a social care or become foster carers themselves.

ready to take the first step?

Join our fantastic community of foster carers in Caerphilly to make a real difference in the lives of local children and young people.

If you would like to make an enquiry, contact us via our website:

www fosterwales.caerphilly.gov.uk/contact-us

Alternatively, you can find our contact details below and/or follow us on social media :

08005875664 Text 'foster' to 78866

fostering@caerphilly.gov.uk

facebook.com/FosterCaerphilly

x.com/CaerphillyCBC

Foster Wales Caerphilly
Tredomen House, Tredomen Park
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what our foster carers say...

Our social worker is just lovely. Nothing is ever too much trouble for her. I know I can message or call at any time and she will always answer or get back to me as soon as she is able to. The monthly visits are so relaxed.

My social worker is always at the end of the phone if I need her, and she phones regularly to check if everything is ok.